15: U.S. Navy--30 [3] (no date) 1944 Formosans
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"A girl may go back to her parents' home within a short period after marriage without too much prejudice if she discovers her new husband to be not all that was represented in the marriage contract. This is a rare occurrence, however, and a most serious matter, not to be undertaken lightly by a woman who values her future happiness.

On the other hand, divorces can be initiated by the man with little or no trouble and on slight pretext. Considerations of prestige or of having to confess to a bad bargain have their inhibitive effect, and a husband who has sent back a girl to her family without recognizably serious grounds will have difficulty in making another match on the same social and economic level."

587 Second marriages are usually looked down upon, but in order to perpetuate the family line a childless widow may marry again. Divorce, although the rate has been increasing in recent years because of financial difficulties and the growing independence of women, is not as serious a problem in Formosa as it is in the United States. Formosa's divorce rate in 1953 was as low as 0.45 per 1,000 population, as compared with a rate of 2.48 per 1,000 population in 1951 in the United States.[15] For good or ill, a popular adage that a virtuous woman does not marry twice is often repeated, and a divorcee rarely finds opportunity for a second marriage.

582 The average age at which men and women marry is reported to be rising. Among young men of urban areas, marriage is often delayed because of financial difficulties. The adoption of daughters often poses a social problem. 597 The old notion that a daughter may be bought 548 or sold like a commodity remains among some uneducated people. Although the purpose of such adoptions may be that of securing a young companion or maintaining the family lines,

15. United Nations, Demographic Yearbook, 1953, New York, 1953, pp. 276-77.

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587 first is uncertain and tends to be the target of considerable hostility.[6] But if she bears a child, especially a son, during the husband's lifetime, her membership in his family is made relatively secure, for she becomes the means for continuation of the family line. If the family has enough wealth and enough adult family members to prevail in the matter, it is to be preferred that the wife remain a widow rather than remarry. The attitudes generated by the family system, which manage to induce nearly everyone to marry once, act to some extent as a restraint on the number of years that may be spent in married life. Depending on the circumstances, widowhood therefore may be permanent and have the effect of preventing many women from being mothers of additional children.

But the prohibition against remarrying is often given lax observance. In Taiwan special arrangements were sometimes made to ease the practical difficulties.[7] Many women must have lost their husbands before providing a male heir, and a childless widow might have very little claim to standing in her husband's family. Because the remarriage of widows was not looked upon with favor, they were not likely to enjoy the prospects of so good a match as those of unmarried women. It is commonly known that a cheap wedding can be arranged with widows, and so they probably became wives of poorer men. With the shortage of marriageable women that existed in early Taiwan, the abundance of widows doubtless was a factor in finding wives for many men who otherwise might not have married at all.

Remarriage is not regarded so austerely for widowed men; the same circumstances affect them, but all work in the other direction. A man has compelling reasons to remarry after the death of his wife, and these are even stronger if he has become the head of a household and the father of children. A widower's incentive was equal to that of a widow, and he had fewer obstacles.

586 Like widowhood, *divorce* also removes some men and women from
162 married life and helps to reduce still further the efficiency of mar-

[6] See Levy, M. J., Jr. (1949), Chapters III and IV.

[7] Since the Chinese conception of marriage and descent is patrilineal, the "normal" course for a widow who remarries would be to enter the family of the second husband. The presence of children born to her as a wife, however, complicates the situation, for they are regarded as descendants in the male line—i.e., members of the first husband's family—and would not ordinarily be relinquished. Among poorer Taiwanese there existed a special form of marriage in situations of this sort, observed also in many parts of China, which provides that the second husband marries *into* the family of the widow's children. Marriage of this kind is deprecated and probably occurs chiefly when a widow is left without able-bodied members of her husband's family.

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riage in cementing marital unions. Divorces are different, however, in that most of them occur early, rather than increasing with the length of married life. They leave (at least initially) an equal number of ex-partners of either sex who can remarry if the institutional system permits. They also leave a lesser total residue of persons in a non-married status. The divorced enumerated in the censuses were very small proportions of Taiwanese adults, and showed no trend with the passage of time save reduction to still smaller sizes at the younger ages (see Table 63).

TABLE 63

DIVORCED MEN AND WOMEN IN TAIWAN

Per Cent of Taiwanese Who Were Counted as Divorced from a Previous Marriage, 1905 to 1935, by Age

Age	1905	1915	1920	1925	1930	1935
			Males			
15–19	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
20–24	1.2	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6
25–29	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3
30–34	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.6
35–39	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.2	1.9	1.7
40 and over	1.3	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8
			Females			
15–19	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
20–24	1.2	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.7
25–29	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.0	0.9
30–34	0.8	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0
35–39	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.9
40 and over	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8

Source: Tables of the Taiwanese population by age, sex and marital status in the reports of each census.

A paucity of divorced people has led observers from time to time to conclude that divorce itself is all but unknown among Chinese. On similar grounds, the abundance of widows is often taken as a rough measurement of how great are the proportions of people who have been widowed. The reasoning behind both types of inference is that the chances of remarriage are poor (especially for women), and therefore the number of observed survivors of divorce and widowhood are a gauge of their frequency.

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586 But neither divorce nor widowhood has been seriously investigated in an agrarian society. Though one must admit that reliable data have been rare, scholars have usually fallen back on stereotypes drawn from the folklore and value statements of the societies themselves. This approach has its pitfalls, especially when these statements are accepted literally without much attention to the social situations in which they have their effect.

Divorce, we are told, happens at the whim of the husband or his family; a wife may be sent back to her original home if her behavior fails to satisfy them on any of several grounds, all very explicitly stated. The divorced woman must return disgraced to her family, nevermore to be sought in marriage. The harshness of this procedure is tempered, mercifully, by prospective loss of the dowry to the husband's family, by recognized conditions that call forth forbearance on their part, and by "local sentiment" which may be offended by the arbitrariness of the whole affair.

In short, the prescriptions of archaic Chinese moral codes leave one with just about as much insight as to what to expect as if he knew nothing of them. In reality not a great deal can be said about the reasons for divorce with the assurance that it is generally accurate. It differs from widowhood in being the outcome of decision rather than death, decision affecting the two families between which the original marriage had been arranged. If a dispute is involved, which is likely, the focal point will probably be the relations of the wife with her husband's family, but only if the marriage was patrilocal. The grounds may be anything rising from these relations, which are known to be difficult. Grievances may exist on either side, though it is easy to see that they originate more readily from that of the husband's family.

586 162 Luckily there is a way of checking on the frequency of divorce in Taiwan, as there is not in the case of widowhood. Its legal significance was judged by Japanese to be sufficient to warrant keeping records of divorce as it occurred. Divorces were registered each year, according to the time elapsed since marriage (in single years of duration up to five, and thence in broader intervals). These data have been slightly rearranged, assuming (with some error) that all of those which occurred less than one year after marriage belonged to marriages made in the same calendar year, that those occurring between the first and the second year of the marriages' duration belonged to

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marriages of the previous year, and so on. It is then possible to calculate approximately the number of marriages of any particular year that ended in divorce within five years[8] (see Table 64). 586 162

TABLE 64

MARRIAGES ENDED IN DIVORCE, 1906-1940

Per Cent of Registered Marriages of Each Year That Were Dissolved by Divorce within 5 Years' Duration
Taiwanese Only

Year	*A. Assuming That* All *Taiwanese Marriages Could End in Divorce*	*B. Assuming That Divorce Occurred Only to* First *Marriages*
1906	14.4	22.3
1910	9.4	13.8
1915	10.5	14.0
1920	7.9	10.6
1925	7.7	9.4
1930	5.8	6.8
1935	4.7	5.2
1939	3.6	3.9

Source: *Statistical Summary*, Table 77.

It makes some difference whether we include those persons who were marrying for the second (or subsequent) time or whether we assume that only first-married couples were divorced. Since the truth probably lies somewhere between these alternatives, Table 64 has a column of figures for each, based of course on the same number of divorces in both cases. Close to 10 per cent of Taiwanese marriages before 1920, nearly 15 per cent if first marriages alone are considered, were regularly being dissolved within five years. The outcome of marriages in 1906 may suggest that divorce had an even higher

[8] For example, it is assumed that first-year divorces in 1910 belonged to marriages of 1910, and that divorces in the second year of marriages to these people all took place in 1911, in the third year 1912, etc. This procedure makes no allowance for those marriages that might have been broken by death, but it will be seen that this omission merely makes the evidence of trend more conservative, and does not exaggerate it.

In most years, between 60 and 70 per cent of registered divorces happened within the first five years of married life. Table 64 must be confined to this period for each annual crop of marriages, because the published data show only the first five years' divorces by single year of duration. The result is that the "divorce rates" of Table 64 represent only two-thirds to three-quarters of the divorces that eventually occurred. This fraction fell slightly during the period of registration, leading to some exaggeration of the decline in divorce shown in Table 64.

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incidence before the registration system was established, but also may have been nothing more than a peculiarity of the early operation of the registration system itself. Whatever its initial level, the divorce rate fell steadily throughout the Japanese occupation. Somewhat under four per cent of marriages registered in 1939 failed to last for five years.

The Prevalence of Remarriage

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It is beyond the capacity of these resources to reveal the percentages of any year's marriages that ever ended in divorce. Our disregard of divorces if they occurred more than five years after marriage and the omission of many marriages from registration make it not worth while to strive for more than this approximation. More pressing is the question of what happened to all the people whose marriages suffered this adverse outcome. Even at its lowest stage in Taiwan, divorce was still not uncommon, and produced far more divorced people than the census enumerations were able to detect. Yet experience with these census materials has justified a high respect for their accuracy; there is no reason to doubt that they are the most dependable of all public records in Taiwan. It follows, then, that a large share of those who had been divorced, amounting to most of all those divorced before age 25 or 30, must have remarried. Moreover, they must have remarried without delay, for as a group they spent too little time out of wedlock for more than a small fraction to be counted as divorced in any census.

By way of illustrating the grounds for these conclusions, Table 65 shows the numbers of Taiwanese recorded as divorced in the census of 1920. In adjacent columns are the numbers of remarriages that were registered to divorced persons during that year. In the second portion of Table 65 the same information is given for widows and widowers. Unfortunately the case cannot be made more rigorously. Since there is no way of knowing how many people of each age became divorced or widowed during the year, the total time spent in either status cannot be estimated, and we cannot construct "remarriage rates" by the same procedures applied to people marrying for the first time. In Table 65 it is nonetheless evident that the turnover in divorced and widowed spouses was remarkably high.[9] Remarriages

[9] The turnover may well have been higher than that suggested by Table 65: some remarriages were probably not registered, and some may have been registered incorrectly as first marriages.

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587 162 without some explanation of the peculiar role of divorce in early Taiwan. But there is a common thread running through both of these problems. The negotiation of marriages has been profoundly influenced by the supply of eligible women in relation to that of men—the marriage market formerly was one in which women of marriageable age were scarce. This situation conferred several advantages on the families containing eligible girls, as against those with young men seeking marriage: (1) an excellent chance to avoid permanent spinsterhood by eventually marrying, (2) a better chance to find a partner not previously married, (3) a better chance for them to remarry, if a widow or divorced, and (4) more favorable terms on remarriage.

586 162 The premium formerly enjoyed by marriageable women supplies the best clue not only to the favorable matches open to families with adult daughters, but also to the reasons why they might afford to suffer the supposed indignity of a divorce. It has been pointed out above that Chinese tradition views divorce one-sidedly—it is something to be initiated by the husband's family, since the wedding makes the wife a member of their household, and the household is where the well-known strains attending her presence arise. But the trends in divorce cannot be explained on this basis. It would imply that husbands, or their families, provoked a profusion of divorces when their own chances of remarriage were at low ebb, and that they became less desirous of divorce as these chances improved.

The wife's parental family does not actually suspend its attachments or obligations to her upon marriage, though commentaries on the Chinese family system commonly give this impression. Her relatives are ordinarily a party to the marriage itself, and may be very alert to the connection which it establishes between the two families. They can often choose whether to let a dispute develop into a break in this connection; sometimes they ensure this turn of events by upholding her interests, or by quarreling over unfulfilled terms of the marriage agreement, whereas they would show more restraint if her chance for remarriage were not good.

58' 162 Nor is the position of the wife herself always so helpless as it is depicted. Over one-fifth of the earlier registered marriages between Taiwanese were not of the "ordinary" type at all, but were matrilocal. Though they did not all have the same standing in custom,[12]

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[12] They include three recognized forms: adoption of a future son-in-law by a girl's parents, who may then be in charge of him from childhood on; simply marrying-in by the husband; and marrying-in with apparently some restriction to his rights of inheritance. The exact distinctions are left somewhat unclear, for the terms are Japanese, and the facts Chinese. It is also likely that there were variations in procedure from one place to another.

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TABLE 69

PER CENT OF ALL REGISTERED MARRIAGES BETWEEN TAIWANESE THAT WERE MATRILOCAL, 1906-43

1906	21.8
1910	20.4
1915	18.4
1920	17.5
1925	16.1
1930	15.7
1935	9.8
1940	7.8
1943	6.2

Source: *Statistical Summary*, Table 65.

these marriages had in common the fact that the husbands entered the families of the wives, in the reverse of the pattern that was considered normal. These extraordinary marriages were a measure of necessity rather than a repudiation of tradition, for they diminished as a share of all marriages along with the major difficulties of men in finding brides. But matrilocal marriage signifies a considerable compromise with the dominance allotted to men by Chinese tradition. Where it occurs, it means that in order to maintain the rule of male descent, either the husband must be relegated to a less important position or the continuity of the wife's family must be broken. Chinese may on different occasions prefer one or the other of these alternatives, but when they resort to matrilocal marriage it is a sign that precedence has been given to continuation of the wife's family line. This solution makes the husband's status in the wife's family rest on sufferance, and cannot avoid undermining his dignity and authority.[13] The norms of patriarchal authority were not undermined, however, in the Taiwanese population as a whole: when men were no longer obliged to marry on these degrading terms, they began to shun this type of marriage (see Table 69). Because it was inconsistent with the rest of the family system, matrilocal marriage presented a special occasion for discord—men were led to expect one kind of familial role as husbands, but required to accept another one that was inferior.

[13] Further compromise is actually possible. Various devices are practiced in China, such as entering the husband on the registers of the wife's family, changing his surname to theirs, and perhaps admitting him to her inheritance, as ways to smooth over the departure from tradition in such marriages. How urgent these niceties are probably depends on the importance and wealth of the families involved—i.e., how urgently they feel the need to keep up conventional appearances.

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Evidently it is mistaken to consider divorce simply as a prerogative of the husband or his family, just because the Chinese believe that it ought to be. Several sources of friction can be found in Chinese family structure that might lead to divorce, but by their manifestations in Taiwan they point to the wife's side, and not the husband's, as having been responsible for its exceptionally high incidence. A great many of the divorces that were recorded must have been precipitated by the wife's family (if not by the wife herself), and it seems inescapable that their willingness to do so was governed largely by the opportunities to find another match for her. The patterns of marriage as well as divorce lend support to this conclusion.

The Reproductive Span of Married Life

One reason for giving attention to marriage is that it is the principal step by which people pass into adult familial roles, and thus embodies many of their ideas about the significance of these roles. It is also a matter of great interest in connection with reproductive behavior, since in all known societies some form of marriage establishes the approved social setting for bringing children into the world. From the standpoint of replacement of members in a population, however, the important thing is not simply when people first become married, but how much time they actually spend in married life. But because a particular marriage almost never lasts through the lifetime of both its immediate partners, the duration of married life cannot be precisely determined for Taiwanese. People are arriving and departing continually, and not all of them leave a sufficient trace in the sorts of demographic statistics that are usually available.

The most practical expedient for estimating the amount of time spent in marriage is to consider only those women of reproductive ages who are currently married at some particular time.[14] In Table 70 they are arranged as proportions of all women at these ages at census dates, confirming what has already been implied above—that many years were spent without their husbands by women who had been married, because widowhood and divorce were too prevalent to be cancelled out by remarriage. As women became older more of them became widows, but the percentages of women who dropped

[14] From the standpoint of demographic concepts, there is nothing inherently "better" about narrowing attention to women instead of men. The main reason for doing so here is that we have ways of estimating the fertility of women in Taiwan according to age, but not that of men. The choice of 15-49 as the age interval to use is dictated by convention, but in other populations it has been found to include nearly all cases of maternity.